



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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January 31, 1975

To: The Secretary
Through: P - Mr. Sisco
From: IO - William B. Buffum *WBB*

Actions we are Taking Regarding
International Organizations in the United Nations System

We have begun to take a hard look at the entire UN system in the light of our experiences in the last year. This memorandum describes briefly the main elements of the overall problem, our principal working objectives and the main actions we are taking during the coming year which we hope will help to counter recent unfavorable trends and even permit us to make some gains.

I. The Problem

Our overall problem has two broad and interrelated dimensions:

First, we face the largely operational side which is that of identifying those aspects of the UN system which provide significant and concrete benefits to us and devising the most practical means of protecting and strengthening them.

Second, we have the more conceptual and longer range part of the problem which is that of further developing our ideas about how interdependence should work, translating our concepts into practical initiatives, and generally trying to gain greater real acceptance among governments and within international organizations for doing business on the basis of genuine consensus.

The problem is an extremely complex one, both because there are so many disparate institutions carrying out such a wide variety of endeavors and also because of the complex political relationships which operate between various countries and groups of countries in and outside the UN. There is clearly no single panacea.

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There are, of course, limitations on our ability to control events in multilateral institutions. In the handling of multilateral issues at the UN, there is an inherent distortion in comparison with the handling of issues bilaterally. Outside the UN, countries know that the weight given their views will to a considerable extent depend on the significance of their actual role in the activities in question. However, in the General Assembly, as well as the comparable bodies of the specialized agencies, the appearance of equality through the rule of one-country-one-vote and the ability of countries with little real influence in the world to combine their voting strength leads to a certain unreality. We cannot realistically hope to change the basic situation since the present LDC/non-aligned majority will not voluntarily agree to basic changes in the rules which lessen its parliamentary power.

Finally, I should note that all of our efforts must be viewed with the realization that we are working with essentially innovative concepts. The idea of interdependence and its application to practical affairs is really quite a recent development. As you pointed out in your interview with Bill Moyers, many of the new countries we must work with formed their identity in opposition to the industrial countries. For the LDCs, therefore, it will, at best, be a gradual process for many of them to shift away from the habit of confrontation toward greater practice of interdependence, and we will certainly have to expect a great many ups and downs.

II. Objectives

The following appear to be the most important working objectives:

(1) Protect and strengthen the effectiveness and responsibility of the Security Council in dealing with crisis situations, including particularly maintaining or organizing necessary peacekeeping forces.

(2) Pursue projects reflecting our view of interdependence with respect to topics of interest to us, like world food problems, promotion of effective nuclear safeguards, population control.

(3) Work to protect specialized agencies from political confrontation extraneous to the technical, economic and social

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missions which these agencies were designed to serve and, to the extent possible, work to increase the efficiency of the agencies in doing their jobs.

(4) Endeavor to increase the willingness of LDC and non-aligned countries to consider UN issues on their individual merits and not to pursue pre-cooked bloc positions. Our objectives with the non-aligned/LDCs add up, I believe, to the basic task of showing convincingly to a sufficient number of these countries that concentration on activities where genuine consensus can be built offers the greatest promise of tangible benefits. Conversely, we should continue to stress, as you have been doing, that pursuit of confrontation politics within the UN system will cause a basic weakening of the system, including a risk of gradual disassociation from parts of it by the United States. In other words, we must try to find ways of making others realize more clearly that they cannot harass us in international institutions while getting cooperation from us on matters of interest to them.

(5) Work for practical improvements in the practices and rules of procedures applicable in deliberative bodies like the General Assembly and in international conferences held under UN auspices. While improvements in practices and procedures will not eliminate the basic difficulties with which we are confronted, they could lessen to some extent the distortion factors which prejudice productive work in a multilateral setting.

III. Actions we are taking

(1) Peacekeeping guidelines. Since your initiative at the 1973 UNGA in favor of establishing general guidelines, there have been fairly extensive and complex negotiations within the UN's Committee of 33 on peacekeeping. For example, documentation has been prepared which sets forth two and in many cases three alternate versions of many guidelines. We will conduct a systematic review of the various issues in order to ascertain whether there are new ideas we can put forward which would reinvigorate the negotiations. Of most importance, however, we need to take stock of whether and how we can practically encourage movement on the Soviet side.

(2) Preparation for the Seventh Special Session. Since the Session is eight months away, we have an opportunity for

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comprehensive, substantive preparations which contrasts very favorably with the extremely rushed and difficult situation that faced us prior to the Sixth Special Session. We have found generally that when the US has a concrete and well thought-through program, as in the case of the World Food Conference, not only is our influence greater, but the outcome is more satisfactory from our standpoint.

For us to be effective it is not essential to propose greater roles for UN agencies or more expenditure of UN funds. What does seem essential is that we have comprehensive and convincing positions on how we believe the serious and growing economic problems of the world can best be managed. With economic contraction likely to be the prevalent state of affairs next year for both developed and developing countries, there ought, logically, to exist some increment of sobriety in the attitudes many countries bring to these discussions. Assuming we pursue a serious effort of preparation, we can properly regard the Seventh Special Session as something of a test case as to whether the General Assembly can carry out responsible work in the field of world economic issues.

IO will cooperate closely with other bureaus and representatives of other agencies. The problems which will be discussed at the Seventh Special Session touch upon pretty nearly the whole spectrum of international economic issues. What we do at the UN must therefore fit within the framework of our broad worldwide economic strategy. In this connection, we should focus principally on three areas. First, possible initiatives which would advance our overall worldwide economic interests. This could include proposed actions which could be pursued inside or outside of the UN system and which could serve both to reinforce our leadership and to supplant proposals we consider unsound. Second, proposals to strengthen the UN's effectiveness in its traditional role of providing technical and development assistance. Third, new suggestions to meet the critical needs of the countries hardest hit by the world economic crisis.

A related project, which I should like to report to you, is that IO and AID have agreed to conduct a joint study of what would be the most advantageous mix, from the standpoint of U.S. interests, between bilateral and multilateral assistance programs. No such review has been carried out in the recent past, and it is possible that, as a result, we will be

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presenting to you specific recommendations which would have a bearing on our approach to the development role of the United Nations, one of the key issues for the Seventh Special Session.

(3) Protection and improvement of the specialized agencies. We have already begun a comprehensive review of the problems confronting the different specialized agencies and the possible tactics which might be most successful to arrest deterioration and to increase chances of being able to handle new challenges successfully.

The basic factors relevant in the different agencies vary widely, including: the assigned tasks; the strengths and weaknesses within the different agencies; their vulnerabilities to political campaigns; and our own assets in dealing with challenges. For example, in some agencies there are strong, technically oriented secretariats which consult with and accept advice from American delegations. In these situations, we can plan to make maximum use of friendly secretariats who want to get on with their essential tasks. In other secretariats, there has been a long record of stultifying inefficiency or non-aligned manipulation and therefore our opportunities for management through this channel are extremely limited. Unavoidably, we will not be able to count on any single tactic for improving the basic work of each agency. Rather, we will need to develop a repertoire of approaches which we can draw upon in differing situations.

To begin discussions among friendly developed countries, to encourage greater efforts on their part, and to exchange basic ideas, I am attending from February 4 to 6 the annual Geneva Group consultations consisting of leading Western contributors to the UN system.

(4) Evaluation within the UN system. A UN committee will begin to meet this spring to consider proposals for strengthening the UN's machinery for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of UN programs. There are, in fact, many areas in which the UN's operations are wasteful, and we have already developed some specific ideas for improving inspection and evaluation.

The issues are not basically confrontational with the LDCs because, if programs can be made significantly more efficient, the benefits should be more substantial for LDCs

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who are the principal recipients of UN assistance. We intend to coordinate our efforts with like-minded developed countries and then to broaden consultations to include leading LDCs.

(5) U.S. participation in the new UN committee on revision of the Charter and UN procedures. At the 29th UNGA, a committee, on which we expect to serve, was established to consider proposals for amending the UN Charter, as well as possible improvements in the UN's practices and procedures not involving Charter amendments. We intend to discourage Charter revision. This is bound to be a defensive operation for us because we know that some countries plan to agitate for elimination of the veto power in the Security Council.

It may be possible, however, to develop practical proposals for changes in the UN's practices and procedures which are not regarded by the non-aligned as an attempt by us to emasculate their parliamentary strength and which would improve the GA's ability to deal with agenda items. The new committee will not meet until July; however, we are beginning the study of possible proposals now, together with other interested bureaus, so that we can have adequate time to coordinate with our friends and to insure that we have ideas of our own to put before the first session.

(6) U.S. participation in international conferences. Many international conferences, not related to a regular schedule of board or assembly meetings, take place under the UN system for a variety of purposes throughout each year. In parallel with the increasing politicization we have seen in specialized agencies, there has also been a growing tendency by the non-aligned/LDCs to use these special conferences for confrontation and to pursue extraneous political purposes. It is desirable to begin more extensive advance planning on how we can resist situations likely to be stacked against us. We have also found that the location of conferences can significantly affect how fair the proceedings are. For example, our embassy in Mexico City has reported a serious deterioration in the impartiality of Mexican host country chairmen at many conferences, even to the point where U.S. and other Western delegations are often prevented from fully expressing their views.

It may, therefore, be desirable for us to take much tougher stands early in the process of deciding on conference

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arrangements, including the possibility of saying that we will not attend some conferences if they take place in certain locations or unless and until there has been satisfactory prior agreement on essential procedural questions. IO will begin a study of the detailed possibilities.

(7) Intensified diplomatic efforts with LDCs/non-aligned. During the last UNGA, significant defections from non-aligned ranks took place on some issues. A monolithic, non-aligned bloc was not maintained regarding either the Cambodian or the Korean issues. It is in our interest to follow up in capitals throughout the year, not just during General Assembly sessions, and IO will prepare the instructions for doing this. Our diplomatic efforts should comprehend discussions not only of political issues but UN economic issues as well.

(8) Selective withdrawal from UN activities. By disassociating ourselves from activities or projects we did not support and which we do not think can have sound and practical results, we may be able to show others over a period of time that there is little practical future for activities which are not based on genuine consensus. We have in the past often participated for damage limiting purposes in bodies or groups we have not favored. However, if an enterprise is fundamentally unsound in our judgment, we might in some cases be less concerned with the results, assuming that we are prepared to disregard them.

There is a broad spectrum of situations to which non-participation might apply, e.g., non-participation in consideration of, or voting on, particular items before the UNGA or its principal committees; non-participation in ad hoc UNGA subcommittees (like the Committee of 24 on colonial issues); non-participation in particular sessions of UN bodies (like a special session of the GA); non-participation in principal UN organs (like UNESCO). We have already engaged in some non-participation in the case of a few UN sub-bodies.

A form of non-participation we have not previously utilized is that of declining to participate in the adoption of a measure, that is, even declining to cast an abstention. This option might be useful particularly as a way of showing disapproval with the manner in which an item was handled, e.g., without sufficient consultations, with unjustified haste, or the like.

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It is our judgment that until such time as there is substantial improvement in the overall functioning of the UN system, there are likely to be situations in which some form of non-participation would be helpful to our overall efforts and that several instances of non-participation by us would gradually and cumulatively stimulate others to a more realistic appreciation of the long-term dangers of pursuing confrontation politics in international organizations. Accordingly, we intend to look carefully throughout the year's work at developing situations to see whenever some form of non-participation might be appropriate and we may present this option to you for consideration more frequently than in the past.

(9) Selective withholding of contributions to the UN or its specialized agencies. There are three possible types of withholding. First, we could withhold for expenditures which we think were illegally or improperly authorized. Second, we could withhold from an entire organization if we believe its activities have been grossly irresponsible. This type of withholding has taken place only as a result of decisions by Congress, e.g., UNESCO and earlier with the ILO. Third, we could withhold contributions relating to individual resolutions or decisions of which we strongly disapprove.

An advantage to selective withholding could be that it could provide even stronger evidence than selective non-participation that the U.S. will not accept serious abuses within the system. On the negative side, however, withholding would obviously raise difficult policy issues and could involve legal questions about treaty obligations to pay assessed contributions. Our withholdings could be utilized to justify widespread withholdings by others, with a significant decrease resulting in the overall effectiveness of the UN and its bodies, including possibly in areas where we are deriving benefit. It would be relatively easy for some of the newly rich countries to pick up the deficits when they wished to, thus minimizing the practical impact of our withholding and even perhaps setting the stage for more irresponsible activities than before. At the present time we do not see situations which would warrant our taking the initiative to withhold funds. However, we shall keep this option in mind as the year's work proceeds and will call to your attention any situations that might warrant its consideration.

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